EECS 440 System Design of a Search Engine Winter 2021

Lecture 18: Ethics

Nicole Hamilton

https://web.eecs.umich.edu/~nham/ nham@umich.edu You spot a valuable painting at a garage sale for \$1. Can you keep that knowledge secret and buy it for \$1?

Probably. But not always.

What if you're an art expert, the seller is aware you're an expert and he's asked you if it's worth anything?

He's relying on you to offer an expert opinion. Whether it's legal or not, you probably shouldn't lie.

You're selling a house and you know the roof leaks and it has carpenter ants. Must you disclose?

Yes. In most (all?) states you must disclose this by law.

You're selling a house with a history: A previous occupant was murdered and there have been stories about ghosts. Must you disclose?

Deaths from natural causes do not have to be disclosed. But each state is different re: suicides, accidents and violent deaths. If it's related to the property, e.g., a drowning in the swimming pool, it has to be disclosed.

Believe it or not, you may also be required to disclose the possibility of ghosts as a "phenomena stigma".

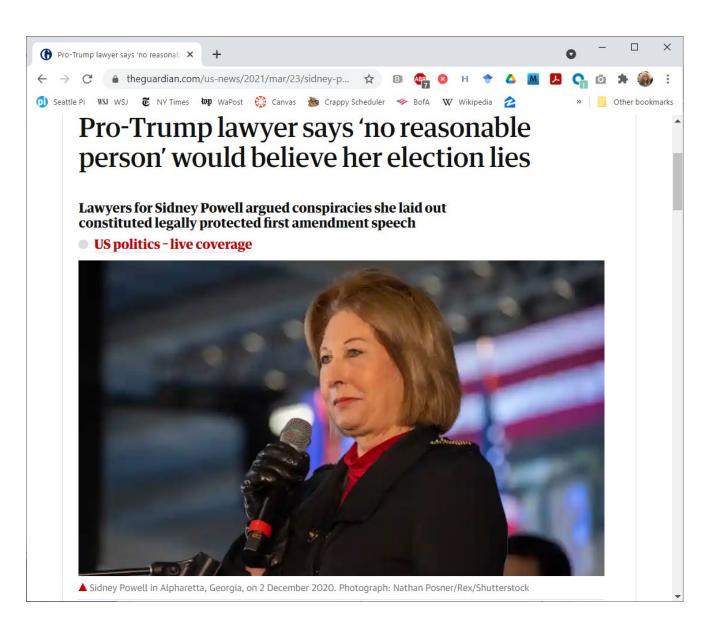
You own a coffee shop promising "the world's best coffee." Could you get in trouble for making a false claim?

No, this is protected as "puffery", a promotional claim expressing a subjective view that no "reasonable person" would take literally.

A surprise use of the puffery defense.

Powell is being sued for \$1.3B by Dominion Voting Systems.

She has claimed that the company was created in Venezuela to rig elections for Hugo Chavez, who died 8 years ago.



A woman is being beaten right outside your door and you see it happen. What should you do?

Sadly, most people do nothing. Sometimes, there is nothing they can do.

The shocking story of Kitty Genovese who was murdered in Queens, NY, while 38 witnesses listened to her screams but did nothing.

She was returning from work around 2:30 am on Mar 13, 1964 when a man with a knife grabbed her and stabbed her while she screamed.

This was on the front page of The New York Times.

37 Who Saw Murder Didn't Call the Police

Apathy at Stabbing of Queens Woman Shocks Inspector

By MARTIN GANSBERG

For more than half an hour 38 respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab a woman in three separate attacks in Kew Gardens.

Twice the sound of their voices and the sudden glow of their bedroom lights interrupted him and frightened him off. Each time he returned, sought her out and stabbed her again. Not one person telephoned the police during the assault; one witness called after the woman was dead.

That was two weeks ago today. But Assistant Chief Inspector Frederick M. Lussen, in charge of the borough's detectives and a veteran of 25 years of homicide investigations, is still shocked.

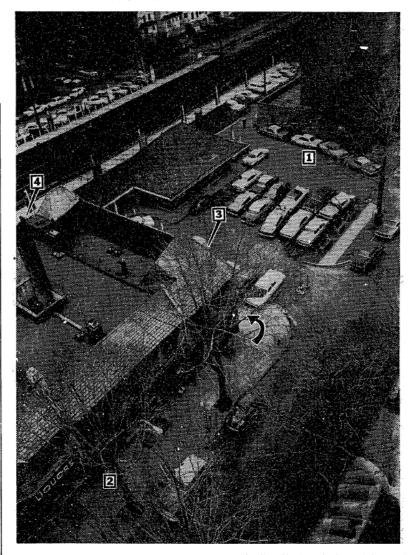
He can give a matter-of-fact recitation of many murders. But the Kew Gardens slaying baffles him—not because it is a murder, but because the "good people" failed to call the police.

"As we have reconstructed the crime," he said, "the assailant had three chances to kill this woman during a 35-minute period. He returned twice to complete the job. If we had been called when he first attacked, the woman might not be dead now."

This is what the police say happened beginning at 3:20 A.M. in the staid, middle-class, tree-lined Austin Street area:

Twenty-eight-year-old Catherine Genovese, who was called Kitty by almost everyone in the neighborhood, was returning

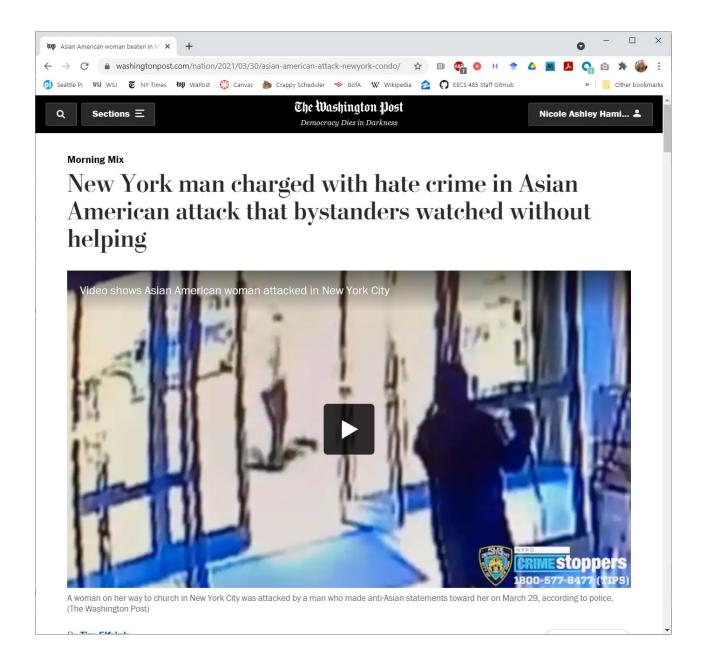
Continued on Page 38, Column 1



At 3:20 A.M. on March 13, Miss Catherine Genovese drove into the parking lot at Kew Gardens railroad station and parked (1). Noticing a man in lot, she became nervous and headed along Austin Street toward a police telephone box. The man caught and attacked her (2) with a knife. She got away, but he attacked her again (3) and again (4).

Ehe New Hork Etmes
Published: March 27, 1964
Copyright © The New York Times

The doormen who watched from inside have been fired.



Ethics

What does it mean to be fair?

What does it mean to be ethical?

When do you have specific duties, e.g., a duty to disclose?

What does it mean to be fair?

What does it mean to be fair?

Typical components:

- 1. Don't take advantage of people.
- 2. Don't abuse power over others.
- 3. Treat people equally.
- 4. Be tolerant.
- 5. Accept diversity.
- 6. Be open-minded.
- 7. Admit mistakes.

What does it mean to be ethical?

This is a tougher question.

What do we mean by ethics?

Ethics

One possible definition:

Moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conduct of an activity.

Branches of ethics

- **Normative:** How individuals figure out the correct moral action.
- *Meta-ethics:* The nature of ethical properties and judgements, e.g., truth, theory of moral principles.
- **Applied ethics:** Applying theories to everyday life, e.g., should abortion be legal, should you report illegal behavior?
- *Moral ethics:* How individuals develop morally, why morality differs between cultures, what is universal?
- **Descriptive or Scientific:** How do people actually behave?

Within applied ethics

Business ethics: Business policies and practices regarding corporate governance, insider trading, bribery, discrimination, social responsibility, fiduciary responsibility, often set by law.

Professional ethics: Standards of behavior for a professional person, often written out as a code of ethics by a professional organization like the IEEE or set by law.

Personal ethics: What an individual believes about morality and right and wrong.

Concepts

- Information asymmetry: When one party has more or better information than the other and could take advantage of the other.
- **Reliance:** When one party to an agreement acts or changes their position based on the other's claims.
- **Fiduciary responsibility:** A duty to act in the best interest of another.
- **Duty to disclose:** A legal obligation to disclose information that may be contrary to your interests, e.g., known defects in a house you're selling.

Professional ethics

Define standards of behavior for people working within a profession.

Generally designed to address the problems of information asymmetry and reliance.

Often written out as a code of ethics.

Examples

IEEE Code of Ethics

AMA Code of Medical Ethics

Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics

7.8 IEEE Code of Ethics

We, the members of the IEEE, in recognition of the importance of our technologies in affecting the quality of life throughout the world, and in accepting a personal obligation to our profession, its members and the communities we serve, do hereby commit ourselves to the highest ethical and professional conduct and agree:

- 1. to accept responsibility in making decisions consistent with the safety, health, and welfare of the public, and to disclose promptly factors that might endanger the public or the environment;
- 2. to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest whenever possible, and to disclose them to affected parties when they do exist;
- 3. to be honest and realistic in stating claims or estimates based on available data;
- 4. to reject bribery in all its forms;
- 5. to improve the understanding of technology; its appropriate application, and potential consequences;
- 6. to maintain and improve our technical competence and to undertake technological tasks for others only if qualified by training or experience, or after full disclosure of pertinent limitations;
- 7. to seek, accept, and offer honest criticism of technical work, to acknowledge and correct errors, and to credit properly the contributions of others;
- 8. to treat fairly all persons and to not engage in acts of discrimination based on race, religion, gender, disability, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression;
- 9. to avoid injuring others, their property, reputation, or employment by false or malicious action;
- 10. to assist colleagues and co-workers in their professional development and to support them in following this code of ethics.

AMA CODE OF MEDICAL ETHICS

Preamble

The medical profession has long subscribed to a body of ethical statements developed primarily for the benefit of the patient. As a member of this profession, a physician must recognize responsibility to patients first and foremost, as well as to society, to other health professionals, and to self. The following Principles adopted by the American Medical Association are not laws, but standards of conduct that define the essentials of honorable behavior for the physician.

Principles of medical ethics

- I. A physician shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights.
- II. A physician shall uphold the standards of professionalism, be honest in all professional interactions, and strive to report physicians deficient in character or competence, or engaging in fraud or deception, to appropriate entities.
- III. A physician shall respect the law and also recognize a responsibility to seek changes in those requirements which are contrary to the best interests of the patient.
- IV. A physician shall respect the rights of patients, colleagues, and other health professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences and privacy within the constraints of the law.
- V. A physician shall continue to study, apply, and advance scientific knowledge, maintain a commitment to medical education, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public, obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated.
- VI. A physician shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve, with whom to associate, and the environment in which to provide medical care.
- VII. A physician shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.
- VIII. A physician shall, while caring for a patient, regard responsibility to the patient as paramount.
- IX. A physician shall support access to medical care for all people.

Society of Professional Journalists Code of Ethics

- 1. Seek Truth and Report It.
- 2. Minimize Harm.
- 3. Act Independently.
- 4. Be Accountable and Transparent.

Seek Truth and Report It

Ethical journalism should be accurate and fair. Journalists should be honest and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Take responsibility for the accuracy of their work. Verify information before releasing it. Use original sources whenever possible.
- Remember that neither speed nor format excuses inaccuracy.
- Provide context. Take special care not to misrepresent or oversimplify in promoting, previewing or summarizing a story.
- Gather, update and correct information throughout the life of a news story.
- Be cautious when making promises, but keep the promises they make.
- Identify sources clearly. The public is entitled to as much information as possible to judge the reliability and motivations of sources.
- Consider sources' motives before promising anonymity. Reserve anonymity for sources who may face danger, retribution or other harm, and have information that cannot be obtained elsewhere. Explain why anonymity was granted.
- Diligently seek subjects of news coverage to allow them to respond to criticism or allegations of wrongdoing.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information unless traditional, open methods will not yield information vital to the public.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable. Give voice to the voiceless.
- Support the open and civil exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Recognize a special obligation to serve as watchdogs over public affairs and government. Seek to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open, and that public records are open to all.
- Provide access to source material when it is relevant and appropriate.
- Boldly tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience. Seek sources whose voices we seldom hear.
- Avoid stereotyping. Journalists should examine the ways their values and experiences may shape their reporting.
- Label advocacy and commentary.
- Never deliberately distort facts or context, including visual information. Clearly label illustrations and reenactments.
- Never plagiarize. Always attribute.

The intersection of ethics and CS

We are entering a world where everything will be captured somewhere as digital data.

Electronic surveillance is happening.

You'll likely be on camera and recorded much of your waking life.

Your cellphone will provide a GPS record of where you went.

The government and others may be monitoring your electronic conversations.

Certainly, anything you voluntarily post or share will never go away.

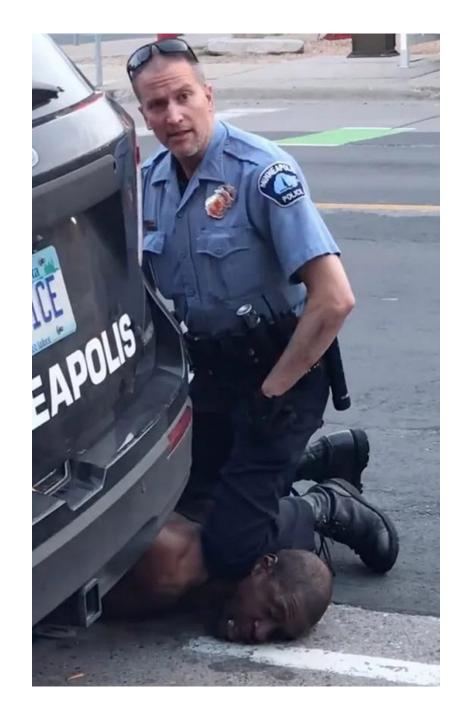
The intersection of ethics and CS

As computer scientists and engineers, you will decide how society uses your work.

Cameras are now everywhere.



Derek Chauvin, kneeling on George Floyd's neck, caught on cellphone.

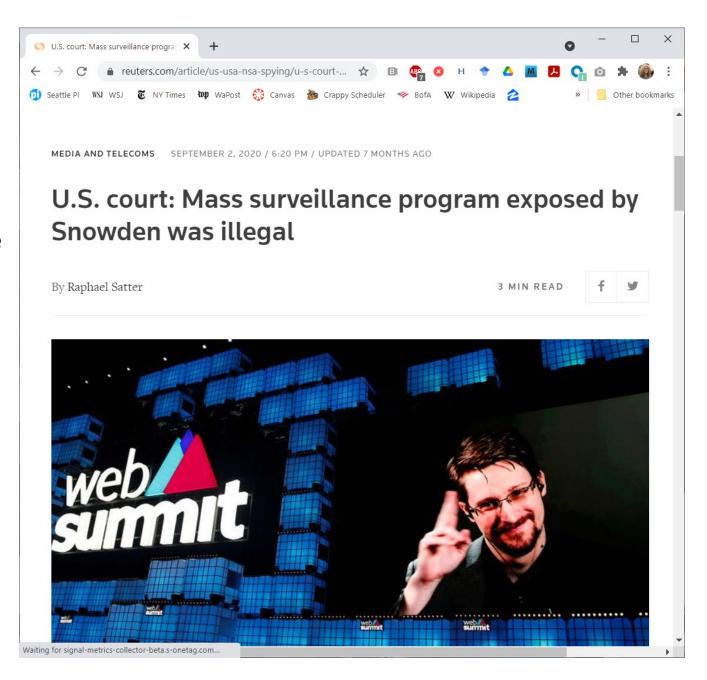


The witnesses, caught on Derek Chauvin's bodycam.



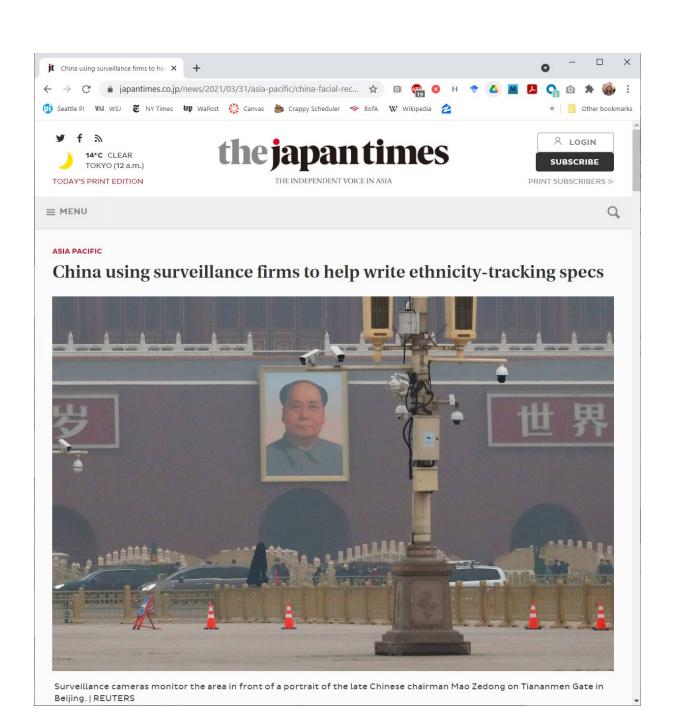
Governments spy on us.

Snowden revealed that the NSA was conducting mass surveillance on Americans' telephone records in 2013.

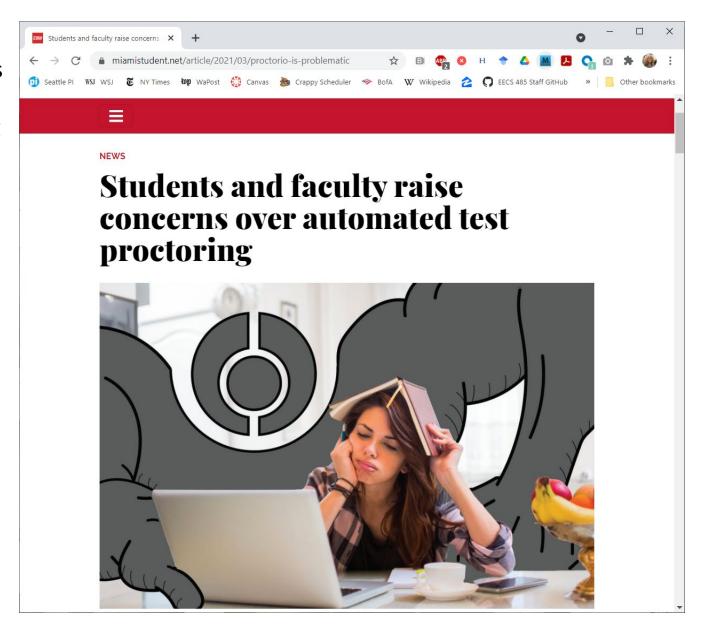


China used electronic surveillance during the pandemic to enforce stay at home orders.

But they've also used it for other purposes.

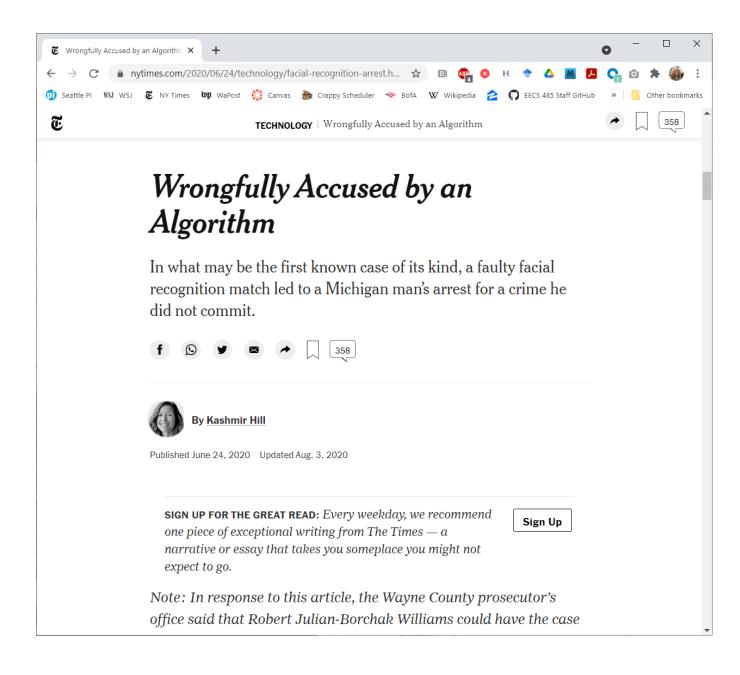


Cameras and other proctoring techniques were briefly considered last spring here at UMich.



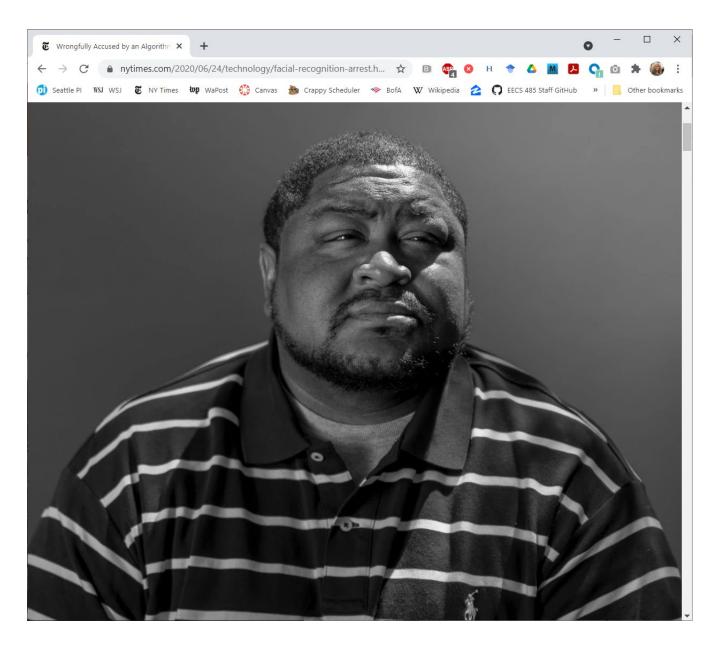
Facial recognition is being more widely used, especially by police.

It's not always right.



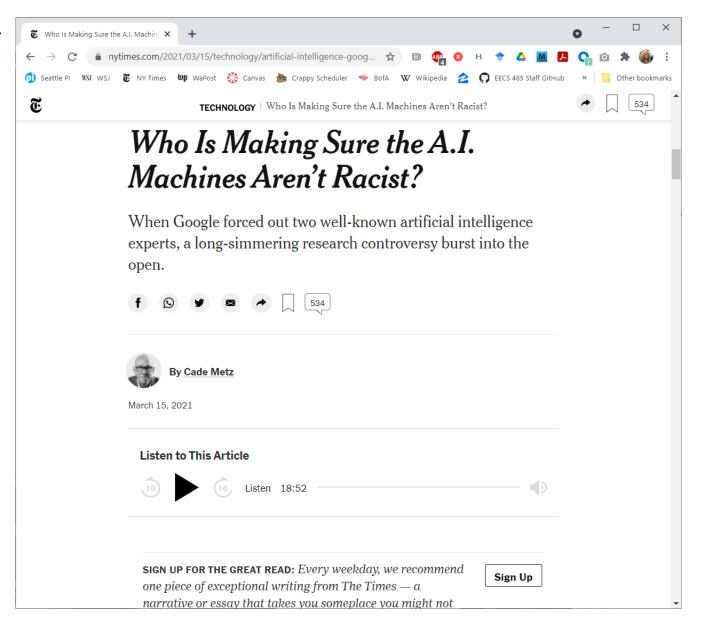
This was the individual.

Facial recognition software tends to be less accurate with people of color.

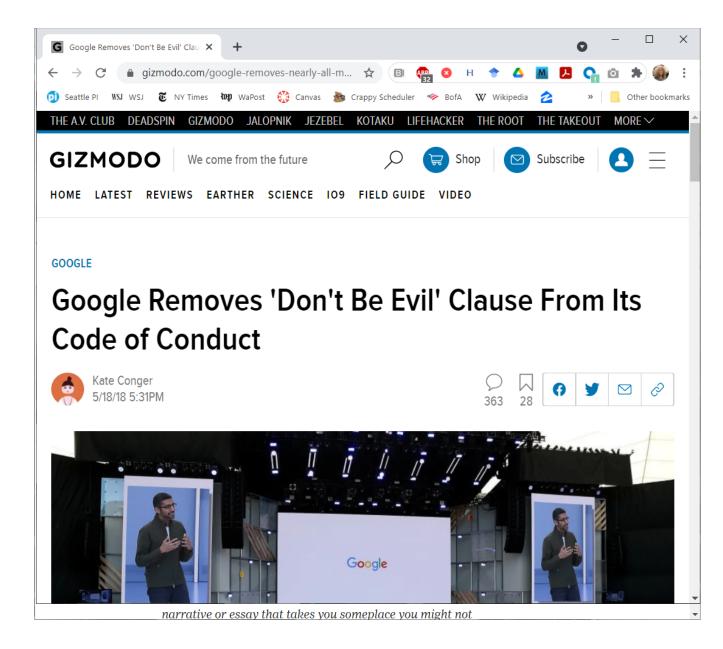


Who is looking out for us?

Google recently fired the young Black woman they'd hired to build their Ethical Al team after she criticized their approach to minority hiring.



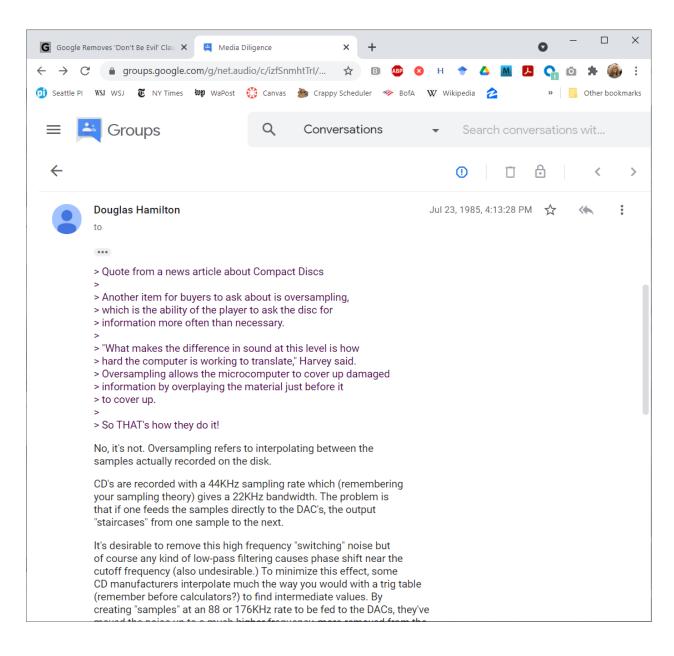
Speaks for itself.



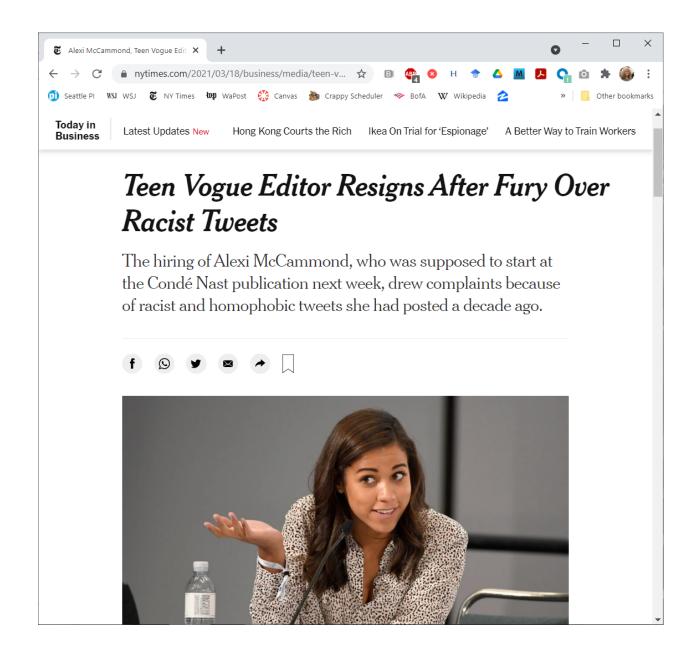
Anything you post will never go away.

This was a comment about oversampling in CD players that I posted to the net.audio Usenet group in July 23, 1985. It's still there on the web.

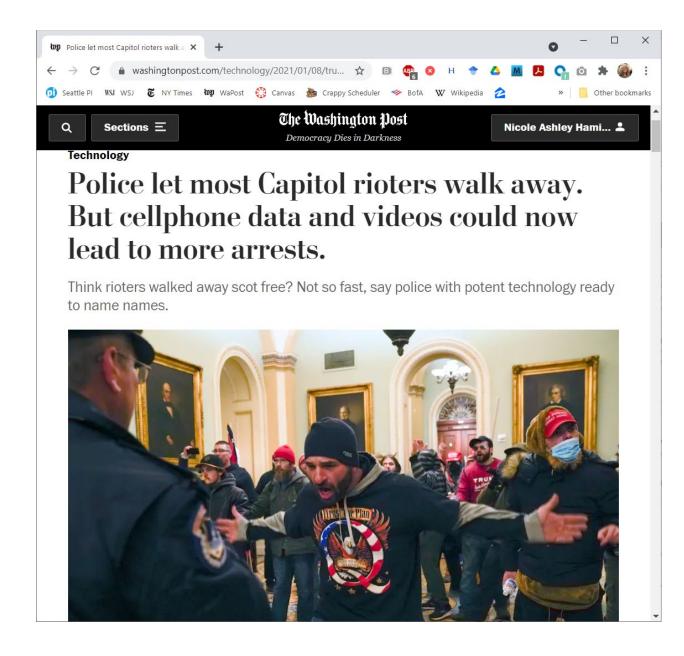
(Thank goodness I was right.)



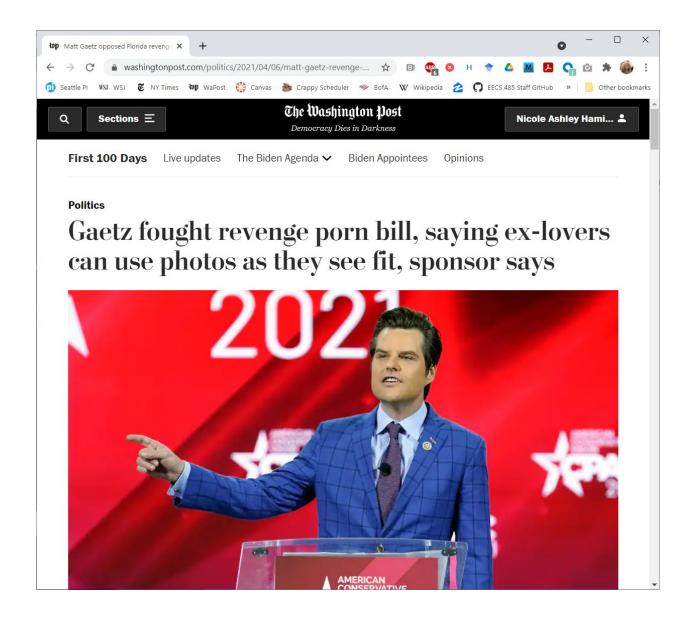
Alexi McCammond was hired, then fired after anti-Asian Tweets she'd posted as college freshman a decade earlier surfaced.



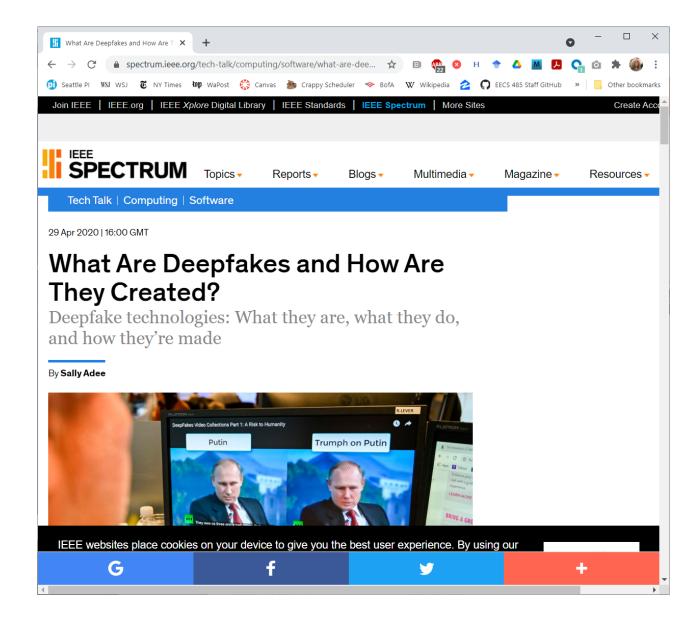
Capitol rioters were undone by their own selfies.



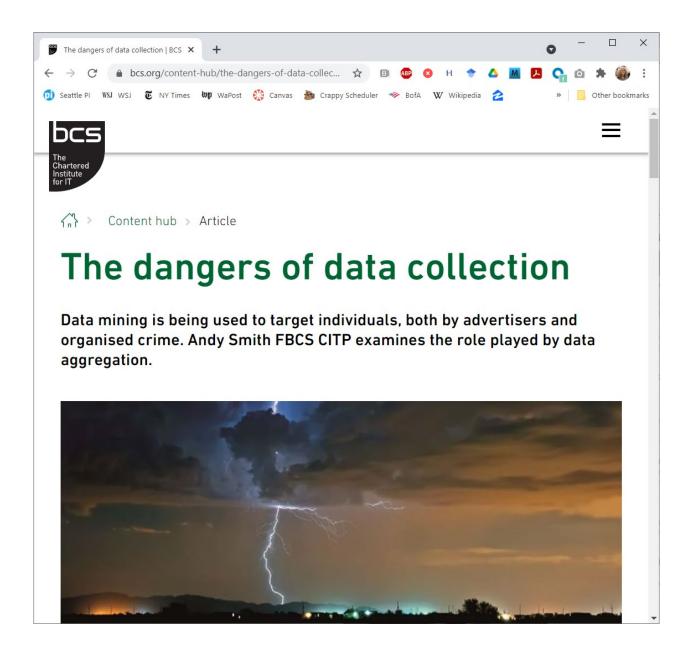
Gaetz is reported to have shown nude videos of his sexual partners to other members of Congress.



How will you know what is real?

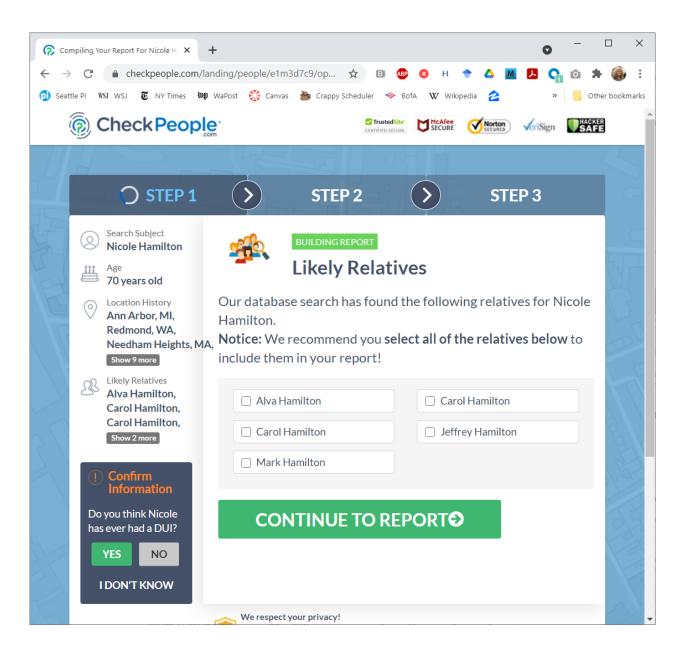


By aggregating enough data from enough public and private sources allows a lot of personal information to be revealed.

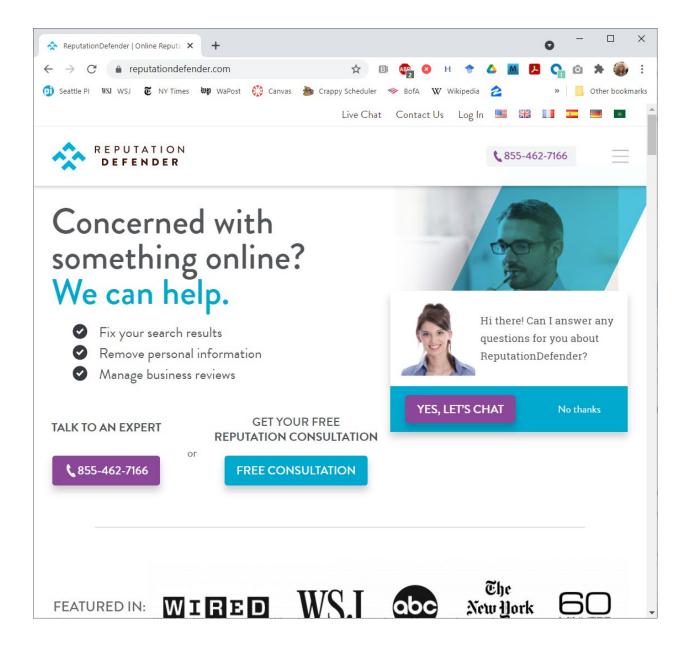


Court records are public. But you had to go there and do the search yourself. Now websites will do it for you.

Yes, those are all relatives.

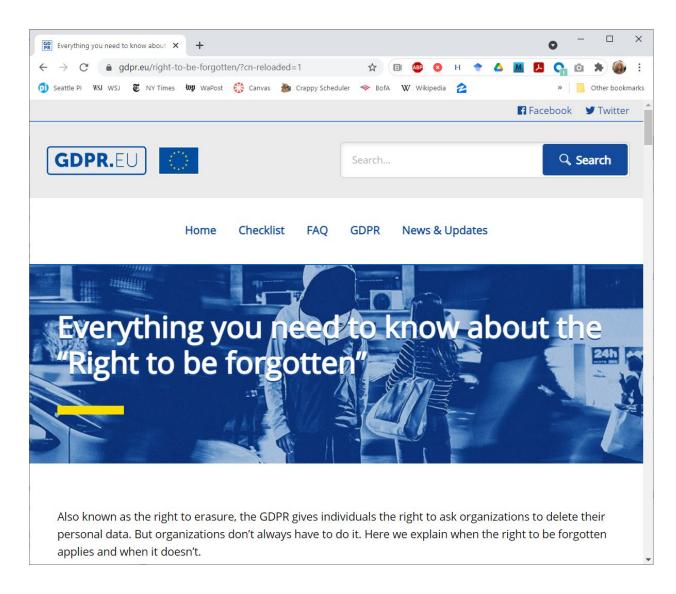


There's now an industry of companies that will clean up your online presence.

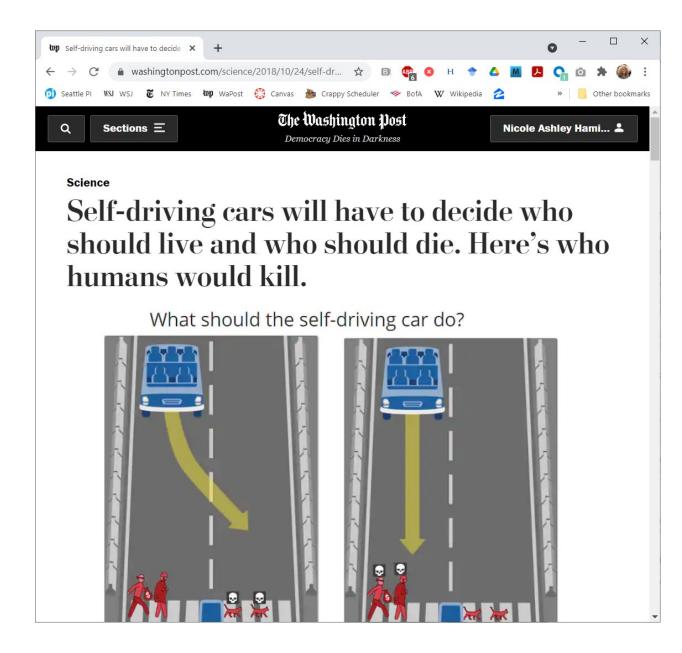


Europe recognizes a right to be forgotten.

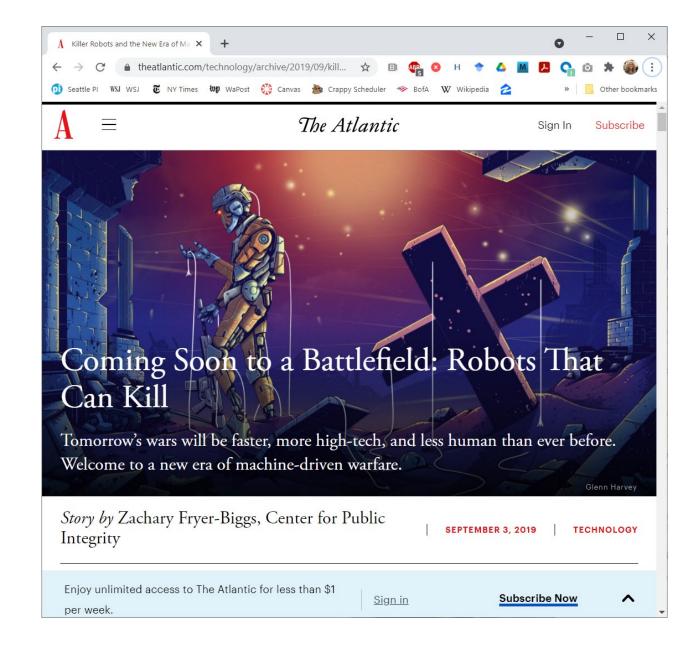
The US does not.



Cars will decide who should live.



And real terminators will decide who should die.



Your generation will have to fix it.

